

Somewhere to turn to, Someone to talk to: What young people have to say...



Introduction

This booklet is written by the Headstrong **Youth Advisory Panel (YAP)**. We are a group of young people between the ages of 17 & 26 who advise Headstrong - The National Centre For Youth Mental Health, in its work to promote young people's mental health and well-being.

Somewhere to turn to, someone to talk to: What young people have to say... outlines where we hope to see change in Ireland and how Headstrong will work with young people and their communities to make this change happen.



Mental Health

Mental health is what we call the set of skills we use everyday to deal with life. It's not just one thing like feeling happy or being confident all the time.

It's about:

- how we learn to deal with tough times
- how we get on with the people we meet everyday
- how we feel about ourselves

When you're mentally healthy you:

- know yourself
- trust yourself
- know your own opinion

We all have it. Even when we feel crap we have mental health. Sometimes it takes being down to make you realise that there is something in your life that's not right. Usually we're strong enough to get through a tough time with just a little bit of extra support. We can also do practical things to help build our mental health and learn new skills to make us stronger.



Challenges

Fitting In

The pressure to be popular and to fit in is huge when we're growing up. We constantly worry about what other people think of us and can easily have our confidence knocked. We feel the need to wear the right clothes, the right logos and have the right stuff.



And if we don't? Many of us feel that bullying is always a threat in the background. Some have to live with it everyday. Others put up a front or try and blend in so they're not a target.



In this entire muddle we try to figure out who we are behind the image and at times this can be tough. We need opportunities to figure out who we are and people to guide us when we face questions we can't figure out on our own.

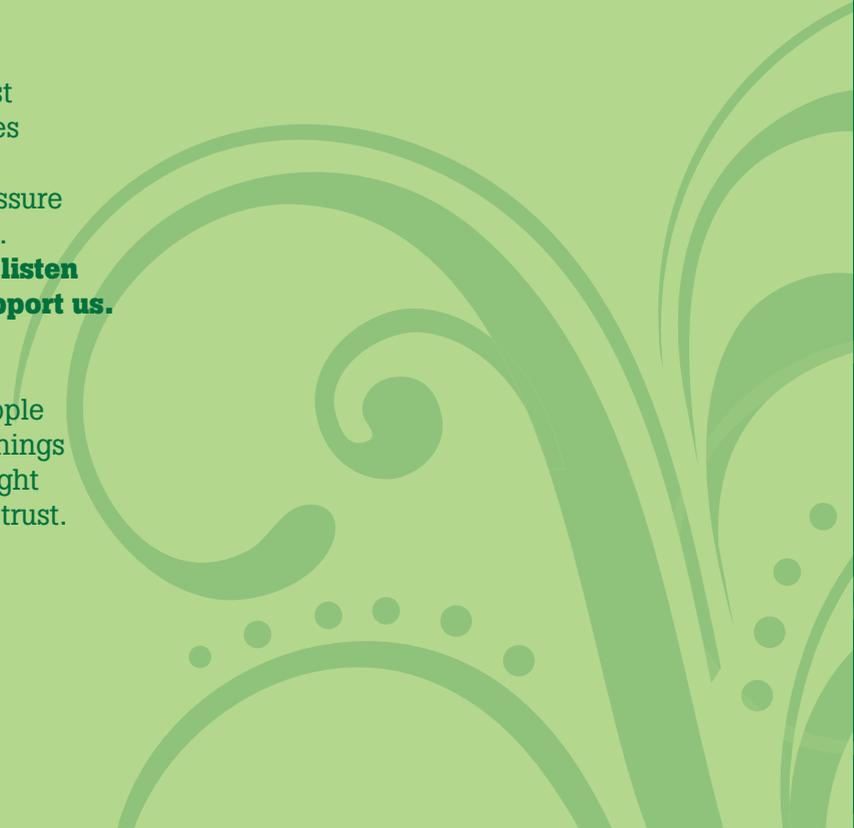


Families & Relationships

The world we're growing up in is changing so fast that our families sometimes feel lost when it comes to helping us. They want to see us doing well for ourselves but sometimes this can create more pressure or cause fights at home if we aren't doing so well.

We need the adults in our lives to trust us and listen to us and when we get stuck to be there to support us.

Having a good relationship with one or a few people who we can trust and talk to is one of the main things we need to help us get through tough times. It might be a family member, a friend or an adult who we trust.



School

School takes up 7 hours a day, 5 days a week. We spend more time in school and on homework than we do on any other activity. So it's important that schools promote young people's well-being and mental health.

Teachers should be better trained and supported to be sensitive to us when we aren't managing well. There should also be more education on mental health and well-being in the curriculum.

If a young person does need extra support they should be able to get it in a way that doesn't embarrass them or leave them feeling vulnerable.

Dealing with Tough Times

We all go through tough times that can cause us to feel stressed. Some of the things that cause stress are:

- a relationship breaking up
- losing someone you're close to
- feeling like you don't know who you are anymore or where you fit in
- not having anyone to talk to or anyone who you feel you can trust
- being overwhelmed by a change in your life
- money worries
- pressure in school or college
- your community – growing up in rural or city areas can sometimes come with their own difficulties
- bullying



Difficult situations that cause stress are unavoidable. So what we need in tough times are the right supports available when and where we need them. This includes having someone we trust and can talk to always available and having a safe, comfortable place to go - in other words 'Somewhere to Turn to, Someone to Talk to'.

What Needs to Change?

1) Access to Supports

- There are limited ways to get support at the moment if you are going through a tough time. You can get an appointment to see a mental health team through your doctor or your school. In an emergency you can go to the Accident & Emergency department at your nearest hospital.
- If you are lucky there might be a local community based counselling service in your area or you might be able to afford to see a counsellor or psychologist privately. Some young people are also linked into local services such as a youth group/club which many young people find helpful.

2) Structure of Supports

• **Youth Unfriendly**

Once a young person does access mental health supports we can find that the supports aren't set up for young people. Services need to think more carefully of the times they are available and where they are delivered from. People who regularly meet young people must also be prepared to treat young people with respect and listen to their views.

• **Being Labelled**

Once a young person does enter the system they can be labelled as being mentally ill - rather than having a mental health issue. A label is not a true reflection of any person and we should not be limited or identified by a label or diagnosis.

- **Connecting Communities and Services**

Specialist mental health services should work with the natural supports we find in our communities. This way using services will not disrupt our lives. When specialist mental health services and communities work together they can help us recover more quickly.

- **Expensive**

Cost puts young people off accessing services. Even accessing your GP can be too expensive for most young people therefore young people don't get the support that's out there for them.

- **Waiting Lists**

Taking the decision to get support is very brave. But if young people don't get the support when they need it or have to wait several weeks to see anyone they may not try a second time.

- **Gaps**

The services and supports that are there often don't work well together. This can make it difficult for young people as they try to get the support they need from a broad range of different services and professionals.



What's Headstrong doing?

Headstrong works with communities, young people and those working with young people to change how we all think about mental health so we are all more skilled in supporting those going through a tough time.

Headstrong has 3 programmes which they do this through:

1: Advocacy

2: Research

3: Jigsaw - Service Development

Advocacy

Headstrong advocates (speaks up) for young people's right to have better mental health supports by talking to people in Government, mental health professionals (including psychologists and counsellors) and people who work with young people on a regular basis such as teachers and youth workers. As members of the YAP, we try and get the public to listen to what we have to say through doing interviews on radio and in the newspapers or speaking at public events. We speak up for other young people and we work to create opportunities for our opinions to be heard.

Research

Finding out from young people what's going on for them is the only way to get a clear picture of what promotes young people's well-being and what causes them stress. That's why research is a key part of what Headstrong does.



Jigsaw - Service Development

From Headstrong's research we know that many young people feel that the services and supports that are already there are hit and miss. Some work well, others don't. Headstrong is currently working in 5 communities around Ireland to demonstrate (or test) a new way of services and supports in communities working together for young people. This new model is called ***Jigsaw***. From Headstrong's research we think that everyone in the community holds a piece of the ***Jigsaw*** when it comes to young people's well-being. This includes young people, schools, doctors, psychologists, parents, psychiatrists, sports coaches and youth workers. We work to bring everyone together to look at what is working for young people and how can we improve the things that aren't working. We hope if this model is successful, that every community in Ireland will one day have a ***Jigsaw*** project.

Getting Help:

Helplines

The Samaritans - 1850 60 90 90

Teenline Ireland - 1800 833 634

Bodywhys - 1890 200 444

Childline - 1800 666 666

Drugs Helpline - 1800 459 459



The Web

www.headstrong.ie

www.jigsaw.ie

www.reachout.com

www.youngminds.co.uk

www.spunout.ie

www.lowdown.co.nz

www.headspace.com.au



www.headstrong.ie



www.jigsaw.ie

Our Vision

**An Ireland where young people are connected to their community
and have the resilience to face challenges to their mental health.**

Our Mission

**Changing how Ireland thinks about young people's mental health through
the *Jigsaw* Programme of service development, Research and Advocacy.**

Contact Us:

Headstrong - The National Centre For Youth Mental Health
Telephone: 01 6607343, Email: info@headstrong.ie

Web: www.headstrong.ie